

May 21, 2019

Jamie Giellis  
Jamie for Denver  
1321 South Broadway  
Denver, CO 80210

Dear Ms. Giellis:

We write to express grave concerns about your latest comments regarding the communities of color and in particular your tweet discounting the necessity and value of Asian culture. With the upcoming election in two weeks, we believe an explanation is due to the Asian communities, so we can better understand your values as a leader.

It is important to note that Denver once had a Chinatown in lower downtown along Wazee Street. In 1880, it was nearly destroyed in the City's first race riot which was one of the worst anti-Chinese incidents in the American West. However, the Chinese remained in Denver and rebuilt their community. Eventually the population diminished and could not sustain a Chinatown as further anti-Chinese violence and race laws persisted. Your tweet wondering why "so many cities feel it is necessary to have a 'Chinatown'" is particularly disturbing in light of the tragic event that happened 149 years ago in the core of our downtown and the racial divisiveness unfolding in our country today.

Your follow-up assertion that "'Chinatowns' became less of the cultural centers that they once were," further demonstrates your lack of understanding of the significance that these historic connections have in our communities as we mitigate the negative consequences of gentrification and displacement. It is not a true representation of our communities' passion to grow and foster our cultural centers.

Asians make up 4.5% of the population in Denver, and is one of the fastest growing minority populations in Denver. In addition to the Chinese community, the Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Indian, Filipino, Mongolian, and many other Asian communities have thrived in Denver's welcoming and friendly climate. Community centers such as Sakura Square and Far East Center/Little Saigon, and areas around South Federal and West Alameda Avenue provide the Asian community with a connection to our culture. These places serve our Asian communities, preserve our culture, and give those of us who were born overseas a sense of belonging. In addition to serving the Asian communities, these are community assets which welcome people from all backgrounds to learn and appreciate our customs and culture. We have made great progress in forging relationships with our sister cities abroad like Kunming-China, Takayama-Japan, Chennai-India, and Ulaanbaatar-Mongolia. It would be a shame for leaders of our City to neglect these partnerships dedicated to the exchange of culture, education, tourism, and business.

There has not been a direct formal response, explanation, or apology to the Asian community for your remarks. The Asian communities need to understand the reasons for your comments to understand who you are as an aspiring leader. We look forward to your response by Friday, May 24. You can contact Erin Yoshimura ([erin@empowerful.com](mailto:erin@empowerful.com)) on behalf of the Asian community so we can better understand your values for inclusivity and diversity.

Sincerely,

Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Colorado  
Asian Pacific Development Center  
Gil Asakawa – President, Mile High Japanese American Citizens League

Harry Budisidharta – Executive Director, Asian Pacific Development Center  
Fran Campbell – Filipino Community Member  
Gigi DeGala – Asian Pacific Development Center, Chair, Board of Directors and Filipino Community Member  
Phouratsamay Chanthavong – Lao Community Member  
Will Chan – Chinese Community Member and Region VIII E3! Ambassador to the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders  
Paul Cheng – Board of Directors, Chinese American Council of Colorado  
Sophia Cheng – Chair, Board of Directors, Chinese American Council of Colorado  
Hsian-Hsiang Chiang – Board of Directors, Chinese American Council of Colorado  
Mary Lee Chin – Chinese Community Member  
Margaret S. Choi – President, OCA Asian Pacific American Advocates, Colorado Chapter  
Rev. Joseph Dang – Community Liaison, Vietnamese American Community of Colorado  
Sylvia Edger – Board of Directors, Chinese Cultural Center of Colorado  
Annie Guo – President, Asian Avenue Magazine  
Calvin Hada – President, Japanese American Association of Colorado  
Rodger Hara – Former Member, Denver Asian American Pacific Islander Committee  
Eric Hiraga – Former President, Japan America Society of Colorado  
Ding Wen Hsu – Board of Directors, Chinese American Council of Colorado  
Thang Le – President, Vietnamese American Community of Colorado  
Kevin Leung – Chair, Hop Sing Denver  
Roger Liu – Asian American Community Member  
Peggy Lore - Retired Assistant Vice Chancellor, University of Colorado - Denver  
Clarence Low – Chinese Community Member  
Fay Matsukage – Co-founder, Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Colorado  
Karen Nakandakare – Japanese Community Member  
Masayo Nishiyama – APDC Board of Directors and Japanese Community Member  
Derek Okubo – Former Chairman of the Board, National Civic League  
Huy Pham – Vietnamese Community Member  
Lily Shen – Chinese Community Member  
Kimiko Side – Former Chairman, Denver Takayama Sister City  
Jason Tataki – Japanese Community Member  
Charlene Thai – General Manager, Asahi Foods  
Gary Yamashita - CEO, Sakura Square  
Erin Yoshimura – Japanese Community Member, Empowerful Changes, LLC  
Adam You – Chinese Community Member  
Stella Yu – Co-Chair, Asian Roundtable of Colorado Founding Board